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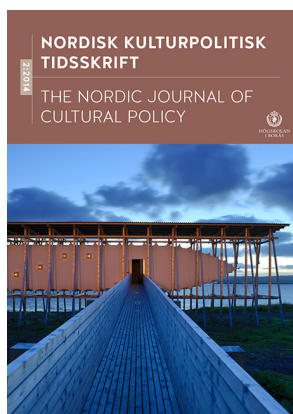
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PEER REVIEWED ARTICLE

Beyond the Scope of Preservation?

On the life and potential national heritage protection of early Danish and Norwegian mass housing

Rikke Stenbro & Svava Riesto

Rikke Stenbro is a Danish art historian based in Oslo. As a heritage researcher and urbanist her work is both theory and praxis focused on the way in which architectural interventions address the temporal texture of urban sites and situations. For the last few years she has been increasingly interested in the built fabric of the recent past and in addressing architectural preservation from a large-scale perspective. Suburban and urban landscapes, mass housing, infrastructural systems and the coexistence and interrelatedness between them are thus central points of interest in her research and in the various planning and development projects she has been involved in as a consultant. While writing this article Stenbro held a position as senior researcher at NIKU (Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research) she has since then taken up a position as senior advisor within urbanism and cultural heritage at Rambøll, Norway. rikke.stenbro@ramboll.no

Svava Riesto is a Norwegian art historian based in Copenhagen. Her research is concerned with how different values and cultural ideas influence the way that the city is understood – and how it is changed. She is interested in a broad range of practices where people change the urban landscape, such as design, planning, heritage management, legislation and vernacular practices. Svava Riesto's work encompasses both examination of existing discourses/practices and proposals for alternative readings/prospects. Her current research examines how large-scale modern housing areas are understood and transformed in contemporary preservation- and urban renewal projects. Svava Riesto is postdoc research fellow at the Dept. of Landscape architecture and planning, the University of Copenhagen. For the last 10 years she has also been advising private and public partners in projects about urban design, urban renewal and urban transformation. svri@ign.ku.dk

ABSTRACT

Why are some parts of the built environment protected as national heritage and others not? Listing is the most restrictive tool of Norwegian and Danish preservation in the built environment and creates a specific version of the past told through buildings and sites. The heritage authorities in both countries present listing as an instrument to protect a representative sample of all the country's built structures and environments (in theory for eternity). The article examines the role of mass housing complexes, a significant product of the welfare states from the 1950s and onwards, in the practice of listing buildings in Norway and Denmark. We examine why two early mass housing neighbourhoods, Lambertseter in Oslo and Bellahøj in Copenhagen, have been considered worthy of listing, but without being listed as yet. The study shows how not only the official criteria for listing, but also tacit values established in architectural history and economic mechanisms effect contemporary decisions about whether to list mass housing areas. In conclusion, we question the role of the official criteria for listing and instead call for a more open discussion about why and how listing creates national history.

Keywords

heritage, welfare city, social housing, mass housing, preservation, 1950s architecture, urban landscapes.

INTRODUCTION

Mass housing – here defined as apartment blocks of more than 1000 housing units according to one plan – is one of the most significant physical manifestations of the Scandinavian welfare states. In order to facilitate what was understood as the good life, designers, planners, economists, politicians, scientists and other professionals collaborated to create affordable, but good housing on a scale larger than ever. The emergence of mass housing from the 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s was supported by a whole range of national political initiatives in Norway and Denmark, the countries which form the focus of this study. New urban typologies for large-scale living units became symbols of progress and optimism for the post-war generations. The increased use of industrialized building technologies that began in the 1950s and accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s enabled the realization of a wide range of mass housing complexes in which hundreds of thousands of people have lived.

When considering the extent and significance of mass housing in the welfare society, one would think that it would be a cornerstone of Danish and Norwegian national heritage. Mass housing seems to fit perfectly with what the heritage authorities define as worthy of listing, i.e. subject to the strongest administrative tool in heritage protection. In Norway, the purpose of listing is to ensure that the diversity and distinctiveness of cultural heritage and cultural heritage environments are kept as a cultural resource for present and future generations (Norwegian cultural heritage act § 1). The Danish law presents listing as a practice to safeguard “buildings which illustrate housing, working, and production conditions and other significant characteristics of societal development” (Danish Act of Listed Buildings and Preservation of Buildings and Urban Environments, § 1). However, mass housing is remarkably absent among the “diverse” and “significant” history of societal development that listed buildings constitute in both Norway and Denmark. This apparent dissonance between the national heritage authorities’ task to represent history and what actually happens has motivated the following investigation.

The issue is important now that many mass housing areas change rapidly. Several areas are aging and their original features are replaced. New residents have entered and so have the expectations as to what constitutes a good home. New political, social, economic and ecological challenges have emerged. The possibility that mass housing areas may encourage alienation and social tension has become a topic of discussion (Bjørn ed. 2008). Local residents, planners, politicians, and a wide range of other professionals are engaged in a continuous discussion about how – and in a few cases if – specific mass housing complexes should be passed on to the future, how they can be reinvented and altered based on multiple agendas.

Heritage managers in Norway and Denmark are increasingly becoming engaged in such discussions. On a local level heritage professionals are increasingly involved in renovation, planning and urban regeneration of mass housing areas, while the national authorities also to some extent engage in the

discussions. In Denmark, a specific rule makes it especially timely to examine the potential listing of early mass housing areas in the present. According to the law on listed buildings, “(n)ormally, a building must be more than 50 years old in order to become listed,” while only in a few cases, newer buildings of “exceptional quality” can be listed (The Danish Agency for Culture n.d.). As buildings from the 1950s and early 1960s have become more than 50 years old, the Danish Agency for Culture has begun to examine and deal with some of them specifically. Norway does not have an age requirement for listed buildings, and the country has a longer tradition for listing recent and even contemporary architecture. In both countries, mass housing from the 1950s has been proposed for listing although no buildings have been listed as yet.

This article aims to contribute to the knowledge base for future decisions and to stimulate an open debate about national heritage protection in the built environment. We ask: What determines the destiny of mass housing in current national heritage selection? Our basic idea is that a deeper understanding of the processes of national heritage selection can better prepare us for decision-making in the future. The article begins by defining national heritage protection as a practice that creates history and which is intertwined with other historiographical activities. We then outline the massive housing programmes of the Danish and Norwegian welfare states from after the 2nd world war and how their physical results are treated in listing. The main part of the article examines the two first mass housing areas to be proposed for listing in Norway and Denmark: Lambertseter in the outskirts of Oslo (1951–1962), (Image 1–2), and Bellahøj in Copenhagen (1951–1957), (Image 2–4).

Lambertseter and Bellahøj are first-generation mass housing areas that have set precedents for later projects. They are comparable in age, size and significance as symbols of the modernization of their countries just after the war. However, they have been ascribed with different architectural and cultural values. Both places have been proposed for listing, and we are interested in what halted these listing processes. We will study Lambertseters and Bellahøj’s reception history from they were built to their present role in a national heritage context. By scrutinizing the public debate about these areas and their role in architecture historiography and national heritage discussions, we will investigate values that influence listing decisions. We analysed seminal architectural historical publications, heritage and planning documents, newspaper articles and other documentation. The analysis was supplemented by field visits and interviews with professionals working with listing.

LISTING AS CONSTRUCTION OF AUTHORITATIVE HISTORY

Although it is sometimes presented as such, heritage is not the protection of absolute values. We understand heritage as a cultural and political process driven by changing conceptions and values (Fairclough 2009, Smith 2006, Kolen 2006). As stated by the heritage scholars John E. Tunbridge and Graham

Ashworth heritage inevitably implies making choices. They write: “all heritage is someone’s heritage and therefore logically not someone else’s” (Turnbridge & Ashgate 1996, p. 21). In a democratic society it is important to discuss who inherit and those who, as a consequence, are disinherited and why this happens.

Today, many actors participate in processes of defining, protecting and managing heritage (Fairclough 2009, Kolen 2005), but here we focus on the role of the authoritative national bodies (in Denmark: The Agency for Culture (*Kulturstyrelsen*) or formerly the Agency for Cultural Heritage, a part of the Ministry of Culture, in Norway: the Directorate for Cultural Heritage (*Riksantikvaren*), sorting under the Ministry of Climate and the Environment). In both countries, these state organs are responsible for listing, while the municipalities appoint and manage cultural environments and buildings considered “worthy of protection”, which are less restrictive protection categories.

When the state decides to actively pass on a building or site by listing, it can be to safeguard what is significant in societal history and/or what has exceptional architectural value. The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage writes that buildings can be listed if they have high architectural value “seen from a national perspective” (Lovdata 2010). The Danish Agency for Culture similarly states that: “All listed buildings are among the best or most characteristic of their type and period” (www.kuas.dk Kulturstyrelsen n.d.). The question of course is what is the best architecture or the most significant cultural expression and what is the balance between the two criteria?

Ascribing architectural value to certain buildings or places is not an isolated activity, but often gradually built up over time. What others have said and written will consciously or unconsciously influence new perceptions of value and ultimately decisions. Regardless of whether the aim is to protect something by law or to preclude that from happening, heritage decisions relate back to historiography. As the British planning historians Aidan While and Michael Short write:

“... regulatory decisions often involve judgements about the desirability and legitimacy of pre-existing and potential heritage meanings. Importantly, these judgements are situated within a set of frameworks, discourses and collective understandings of heritage/design identity of a particular locale enacted at different levels of decision making and accumulated over time...” (While & Short 2011, 5).

In the following we investigate how such an accumulation of meanings works concerning Bellahøj and Lambertseter and how it influences the present heritage discourse of those areas.

HOUSING IN THE WELFARE STATE – EXPANSIVE AND UNDERREPRESENTED IN LISTING

Like many other Northern European countries Norway and Denmark experienced unprecedented population growth and migration from rural to urban areas in the three decades after 1945. In the same years, there was an emerging demand for a better standard of living for low-income families and critique of the housing in the historical city cores. The projects that followed relied on the combination of two main ideas; that architecture can contribute to social reform and that industrialized building methods and materials can enable better housing for more people with the existing means at hand.

The Danish and Norwegian states actively worked for increasing the supply of housing. They initiated building legislations that promoted apartment block buildings with standardized materials and new forms of construction from the 1950s and especially after 1960 (Kronborg 2003, Annaniassen 2006, Bitten et al 2012, Gaardmand 1993, Bæk Pedersen 2005). The Norwegian model of welfare housing was based on cooperatives and private developers. The main idea was that everyone should have the opportunity to own their home, which the state subsidized by loans formalized in the national bank for housing. The cooperative housing complexes are owned by those who live there, each apartment entitled to one share. The shareholders are obliged to take part in collective decision-making on financial issues, maintenance and joint action in the cooperative.

Similar constructions exist in Denmark, but the welfare state housing policy followed a different track. Here, independent housing organizations, *almennyttige boligforeninger*, built rental flats supported by state funding and national legislation that controls the development (Bendsen et al 2012, Larsen & Larsen 2007). Some of the apartments were reserved for social clients, who were assigned housing by the municipalities. Similar to the Norwegian cooperatives, this system means that the residents have a significant say regarding the financial running of the complexes through a tenant democracy. Today, 1 million Danes, or 20% of the population, live in such publicly funded rented housing, be it terraced housing, single-family houses, mass housing or other types of buildings (Almennyttige boligselskaber n.d.). Both the Norwegian cooperative housing complexes and the Danish social housing from the 1950s-1970s were built with a great concern for collective facilities such as parks, schools, laundries, assembly halls, canteens, playgrounds, etc.

These efforts to provide new housing in Norway and Denmark were immensely effective. The number of housing units built between 1945 and 1989 exceeds all previous periods in both countries: 1,479,421 new homes were built in Norway and 1,750,000 in Denmark, which had a slightly higher number of inhabitants during this period, (SSB n.d., Gaarmand 1993, 12). This reflects a period in which the building activity was unprecedented. In both Denmark and Norway approximately half of the total sum of existing buildings today stems from the period 1945–1989 (Tietjen 2010, 37, Askeladden n.d.).

While both countries built a comparable amount of new homes in this period, the pace of the building was different. Norway had been severely damaged during the 2nd World War and needed to resurrect destroyed cities and regions, especially in the north, whose massive war damages exasperated the housing shortage. Right after the war, according to the Norwegian historians Elsa Reiersen & Elisabeth Thue (1996) Norway had a shortage of 100,000 homes. Denmark suffered less damage in the war, and the development began more slowly with some 20,000 new housing units being built per year between 1945 and 1960, followed by a more rapid period of construction of 50,000 units per year from 1960 to 1975 (Gaarmand 1993, 12. See also Larsen & Larsen 2007). Although single-family housing became a wide-spread phenomenon, around 23,000 multi-storey housing blocks from 1945–1989 exist in today's Denmark (Tietjen 2010, 40).

The buildings that were part of the welfare states housing programs are easily defined within the listing objectives of showing significant parts of societal development, and it is relevant to ask: How is housing built after the 2nd world war actually dealt with in Norwegian and Danish national heritage protection? In Norway, of the 5,800 listed buildings, only 100 are dwellings built after 1945 (Askeladden). Of Denmark's approximately 7,000 listed buildings, less than 50 represent housing built after 1945 (FBB n.d.). Those listed post-1945 dwellings are mostly single family houses, drawn by renowned architects such as Arne Jacobsen, Mogens Lassen, Arne Korsmo and Christian Norberg-Schulz. Housing in general and mass housing in particular plays a minor role in the history told through listed buildings. The larger the extent of a type of housing – multi-storey in general, mass housing in particular – the smaller the role it plays in listing.

The proposals to list Lambertseter and Bellahøj suggest that things may be changing. Also, the Danish Agency for culture is beginning to examine and deal more closely with the buildings from the welfare period through various initiatives. In 2006–07 the Agency has funded and promoted a pilot-project that defined a 1950s multi-storey housing area as local heritage (Kulturarvsstyrelsen & Realdania 2007). In 2008, the Agency dedicated the yearly Danish Heritage Day to the architecture of the welfare society (Sverrild 2008). As we write the Agency is preparing a thematic survey of all buildings by state-funded housing associations.¹ The function of such a survey is to "give the Agency for Culture a substantial knowledge in order to consider, whether there is a need for listing in the given category and if yes, then which buildings" (Kulturstyrelsen n.d.). This survey may highlight the historical significance and/or architectural quality of selected mass housing areas, which can potentially support decisions to list such areas in the future.

1. Information retained from Jannie Bendsen, special consultant at the Danish Cultural Agency, June 2014

With this general picture in mind, we now investigate the two first mass housing areas, which have been proposed for listing; Lambertseter and Bellahøj, how they have been perceived in the past and why they have not (yet) been listed.

LAMBERTSETER

Lambertseter was built between in a particular period in Oslo's history when politics and planning merged and decisions regarding the construction of mass-housing in the outskirts of Oslo could easily be transposed into reality. A group of prominent Norwegian architects, some directly involved in developing Oslo's new towns, had already become closely affiliated with the influential international conference of modern architecture, CIAM. The Norwegians were organized in a local subgroup called, PAGON (Progressive Arkitekters Gruppe Oslo Norge) and inspired by their international colleagues who thought that cities should be separated into discrete zones for recreation, production, living or transport, as written in the Athens charter. The architectural goal of PAGON was to create a new universal architecture by using the materials and language of their own region and time (Lund, 2008). Several PAGON members held positions that made it easy for them to transpose theory into praxis.

Erik Rolfsen was perhaps one of the most influential of them, especially in terms of planning. As head of the town planning office in Oslo from 1948 to 1973, he played an important role in the development of Oslo's new towns and the ambitious enlargement of the infrastructural network, especially the metro system. His views on urban planning were clearly influenced by his political beliefs. In his early years from 1933–36, he was Editor-in-chief of *Plan*, an architectural journal published by the Socialist Architects Association. The editorial team, counting many important figures in Norwegian planning after the war, collectively joined the Social Democratic Party in 1936 including Frode Rinnan. Rinnan designed the earliest new towns in the Aker municipality, which were included in the municipality of Oslo in 1948. He drew the new regulation plan for several of Oslo's new towns, amongst others Lambertseter and Tveita. Rinnan was only a member of PAGON for a short period, but he remained a member and local council representative of the Social Democrats. Rinnan's intertwined positions as colleague and friend of Rolfsen, as a local politician and as a practitioner of architecture makes him an interesting figure. With a foot in both politics and planning, his transference of political ideas into a built reality seems to have been a smooth operation.



Aerial photo from Lambertseter in the early 1950s showing that the existing topography and vegetation were used as formative concepts in the planning of Lambertseter. Courtesy Oslo City Archive.

Lambertseter became the first of a series of new towns built in the outskirts of Oslo. Due to its relative proximity to the city centre, the farm land of Lambertseter Gård, an area previously belonging to Aker municipality, was considered an attractive site for a new suburban neighbourhood. Aker municipality merged with Oslo in 1948 to provide the necessary areas for urban development. A new general plan from 1950 substitutes the previous principle of concentric city growth by the idea of a series of sub-centres along four new suburban metro lines, like pearls on a string. Infrastructure was intended to act as a backbone and as a formative feature in this urban development scheme. Lambertseter was, as the other new towns in the eastern part of Oslo, located on the valley slopes in the urban outskirts in close proximity to both *Marka*, the protected forested and hilly areas surrounding Oslo, and the city centre. Simultaneous with the development of a general plan, a more detailed plan for the regulation of Lambertseter's mass housing was prepared. This plan, prepared for 10,000 inhabitants in the area, a figure that was doubled during the 1950s (Spjudevik 2007) (Image 1–2).

Lambertseter was intended to create adequate accommodation for the masses, regardless of income. The planning and design included not only housing, but also local service centres, schools, kindergartens, shops, post offices and banks all situated in an open green park-like environment.



Site plan of Lambertseter drawn by Frode Rinnan in 1950. Spread out from this suburban centre we find six distinct neighbourhoods dominated by three and four-storey apartment blocks grouped around common areas and/or institutions to serve the 10,000 inhabitants. Courtesy Oslo City Archive.

A vital and structural element in the overall plan that was commissioned by OBOS, Oslo Bolig og Sparelag (Oslo Housing and Savings Society) is the mall (the first of its kind in a Scandinavian context) and the metro station. Spread out from this suburban centre we find six distinct neighbourhoods dominated by three and four-storey apartment blocks grouped around common areas and/or institutions. These facilities were intended to serve the inhabitants, while also working in the service of society (Slagstad 2001, 355.) Each neighbourhood had its own architect; Marmorfeltet was drawn by Erling Viksjø, Bergkrystallen by Eyvind Moestue, Blåfjellet by Knut Knutsen, Rabben by Odd Nansen, Pynten by Bjercke and Eliassen and Steinspranget by Strømmer and Brorgrud Petersen. Diversity was thus already a key concept of the plan. For practical and economic reasons, houses had to be oriented north/south following the rocky terrain. Cliffs and ridges were incorporated into the plan and the buildings grouped around them (Image 2). A main consideration was to locate the blocks so that most of them received plenty of light and had a nice view. The forested terrain was utilized as a simple, inexpensive and maintenance-free recreation area and was preserved more or less as found. Some of the most significant built structures in the area including Lambertseter Gård and a pre-war radio broadcasting building were kept, the latter being the only structure in the area that has been listed. The old farm and the radio broadcasting building have both been used as historical identity factors in the area, the farm giving its name to the entire new town and being reused as a community centre, while roads in the area have been given the name of the broadcasting building.

The new housing units at Lambertseter were in themselves nothing new, not even in the eyes of the architect. As Rinnan stated in the booklet on the area from 1958: “There has not been any major or radical experiments in neither construction nor in the choice of housing types. Seen as a whole, both in terms of its scale and organization the independent and complete urban district is in itself the greatest experiment achieved” (Lambertseter 1958).

BELLAHØJ

Just as Lambertseter, Bellahøj was named after the agricultural property upon which it was built. Furthermore, in both cases, the historical farm buildings were listed while the new housing area was realized; Bellahøj Farmhouse was listed in 1954 (The Danish Agency for Culture, n.d. 2). The city of Copenhagen had bought the land of the former Bellahøj farm, and considered this to be the last opportunity to build large-scale housing within the municipal borders (Kristensen 1946). Copenhagen’s expansive growth in the following decades would extend the city to the suburban municipalities along the S-train lines and roads following the so-called ‘Finger Plan’. Like Lambertseter, Bellahøj was established close to a recreational area that was under nature protection; Degnemosen. Both places share the idea of modern, healthy and pleasant urban living with freestanding buildings in a recreational, pastoral landscape, which maximizes sun, light and air. The overall typology was based on ideals that had

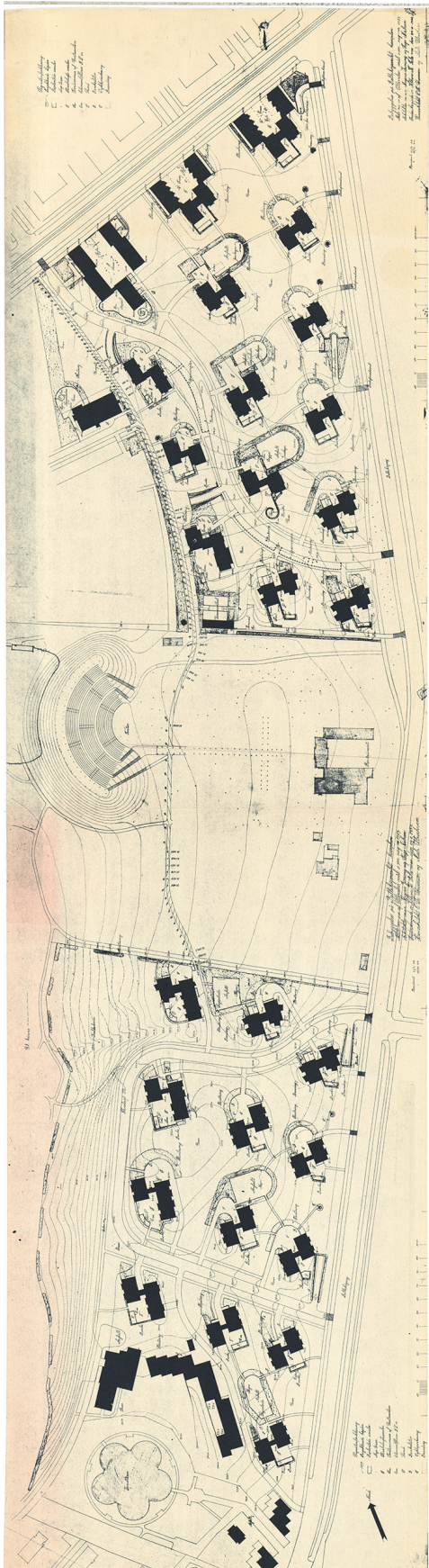
been promoted by the influential architect and theorist, Le Corbusier, and has roots in the English garden cities.



Bellahøj is one of the highest slopes in the city of Copenhagen. When Denmark's first high-rise dwellings for 1.300 apartments with a large recreational landscape were realized here in the 1950s Bellahøj became a symbol of the improved living conditions, welfare and optimism in post-war Denmark. Photo: Svava Riesto.

The Danish building industry was largely inactive during the German occupation and the architecture competition for the new housing area Bellahøj in 1944 was a big event that was also meant to inspire future building projects (Larsen & Larsen 2007, 23). The building commission was to optimize the number of dwellings, but also to “preserve the free and park-like character” of the sloping terrain (Kristensen 1945, 13). Architects were requested to concentrate the houses in tall units of no less than six storeys in order to restrict building on the green landscape. The winning entry came from two young architects; Tage Nielsen and Mogens Irmig, who proposed a plan for 28 buildings standing in a curved, green landscape that continued down to the marshland Degnemosen. The houses are 9–13 storeys high and are placed to ensure the best possible view and to maximize light, while minimizing shade for neighbours (Image 3–4). The buildings are still exceptionally high for central Copenhagen and standing placed on the 37 meters slope Bellahøj, which is the highest point around the city, they form a landmark in the city.

C.Th. Sørensen, who was a famous landscape architect in the 1950s and who had initially been part of another competing team, was hired to design the landscape as the plan was realized after the competition. Together with his partner Niels Ulrichsen, Sørensen transformed Bellahøj's agricultural landscape into a recreational park with softly sloping lawns and ash trees, leaving some structures from the old farmland (Image 4). Close to the entrances to the buildings



Landscape plan of Bellahøj by C. Th. Sørensen and Niels Ulrichsen, 1952, based on an urban plan by Tage Nielsen and Mogens Irming from 1944. Bellahøj's highrise buildings are grouped to the north and south of a large green park with an historical farm and a circular open air theatre in the centre. Courtesy Danish National Art Library, collection of Architecture Drawings.

are planted dense volumes of bushes and trees, which provide protection from the wind and mediate between the large scale of the buildings and the human body. The parking lots are framed by dense vegetation, which hides the cars away from this pastoral landscape – at least from some viewpoints. Sand boxes, a sign of the large interest in promoting children's play in the 1950, are located in front of each house so that mothers can watch their children from upstairs. The massive amount of soil left-over from digging the foundations of the high-rise buildings (app. 60,000 m³) was used to make a large open-air theatre centrally placed where there had been an old theater (Sørensen, 1975, p. 173). Additional shared facilities included a communal house with rooms for staff and guests, party rooms, a child care institution, laundries, and a library.

The 1,300 apartments at Bellahøj were constructed by various housing associations; AAB, AKB København, FSB and SAB, which used their own architects: F.C. Lund, Dan Fink, Eske Kristensen, Ole Buhl, Harald Petersen, Edvard Heiberg, Karl Larsen, a/s Dominia and the directorate of the city architect. The buildings followed the plan's overall scheme with high-rises of varying heights accentuating the hill – the highest on top, and the lowest at the foot of the slope. All are split up into so-called 'twin-houses'; two high-rise buildings that are linked by a staircase and an elevator. Following this typology and the overall pattern, the architects developed different ground plans for the apartments, used different construction methods and façade materials – e.g. yellow brick, tiles, concrete slabs – and created a high degree of variation through architectural details. Bellahøj's buildings appear at once homogeneous and diverse.

Bellahøj quickly became famous as an extraordinary place to live as it represented Denmark's first high-rise buildings, which some people even called "skyscrapers" (Bertelsen 1997, 26). This new building type was encouraged by governmental policy, in the form of a planning act in 1939, and further promoted by the Housing Ministry which had encouraged industrially produced materials and building techniques since its inception in 1947

(Larsen & Larsen 2007). Bellahøj was also an early Danish experiment with prefabricated concrete elements with different façade cladding and construction techniques. The National Building Research Institute (SBI) supervised the innovative building project (Bie 1955). In the decades to follow, industrial building techniques and materials were further developed in other mass housing projects (Larsen & Sverrild 2012). Nevertheless, most apartment blocks in Denmark in the 1950s–1990s were constructed by craftsmen using brick (Gaarmand 1993, 52).

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF TWO PORRIDGE-TOWNS

Although built as affordable housing, Bellahøj and Lambertseter became popular among the middle class. The apartments were relatively small, but offered a higher standard of living compared to housing in the city centres. The green landscape, the view and the fresh air were very attractive features of the new housing. Furthermore, both Bellahøj and Lambertseter came to signal the optimism of societies that yearned for renewal and progress. The experimental concrete houses at Bellahøj were three times as expensive as had originally been estimated and many workers could not afford to live there. In Lambertseter, both the share and the rent were high for an area located in the eastern part of the capital. The new inhabitants were initially those OBOS members with the most seniority, the majority of whom were parents aged between 26 and 40. Approximately 70 percent of the male residents were workers, 12 percent had university degrees and 24 percent a general certificate of education (see Rabben Borettslag n.d.). Both places were nicknamed porridge-towns, reflecting the fact that people had to restrict themselves financially in order to be able to afford to live there.

Myths and stories have surrounded both places. The Danish national TV series, *Krøniken*, shows two main characters optimistically moving into green Bellahøj when it was new. This publicly funded TV series from the 2000s presents the well-known housing area as an icon of the postwar living conditions. Lambertseter plays a similarly symbolic role in Norwegian cultural history, and was the setting for several postwar films, “Lambertseterkomediene” that portrayed life in the new suburb. These films are all permeated by optimism and portray the first generation of suburban dwellers, which experienced modern comfort in standardized apartments.

The social fabric of Bellahøj and Lambertseter has changed during their lifetime. Today, 35% of Bellahøj’s residents are unemployed (Københavns Kommune 2012, 21), and Copenhagen Municipality describes Bellahøj as one of the most “challenged housing areas” in the city (ibid). Bellahøj’s presence in the public debate includes discussions about safety and physical problems, for instance poor façade insulation. However, at the same time, Bellahøj is a popular place to live and residents express pride and satisfaction with the apartment’s layout, the extraordinary view, the park and the sense of community in

the area. Similarly, Lambertseter is today – after having struggled with social problems and a relatively bad reputation during the 70's and 80's – both amongst inhabitants and in the general public considered one of Oslo's most functional and attractive residential neighborhoods. The centre has been significantly enlarged and the apartment blocks have been improved and refurbished along the way in order to make up for the deficiencies that they were born with amongst others because of the lack of decent quality building materials at the time of their construction. Many of the inhabitants have lived here from the very beginning and many of the children that grew up in these blocks have also chosen to settle here as grown-ups.

LAMBERTSETER – HISTORIOGRAPHIES

From the late 1960s, Norwegian architectural historians and -critics echoed the widespread international critique of mass-housing architecture. Once the most acute shortage of housing had diminished in Oslo in the late 60s and early 70s, and the modes of production had been thoroughly rationalized, a critique informed by social sciences emerged which claimed that the scale and architectural layout of the new towns alienated the inhabitants (Hansen and Sæterdal, 1970). In a comprehensive anthology on Norwegian art history the influential architect and architecture historian, Christian Nordberg-Schulz, who had been a key figure in the dissemination and implementation of CIAMs ideas in Norway, describes the architectural development in Norway between 1945 and 1980. He recognized that the problem of housing had been the point of departure for the rise of modern architecture and for Norwegian architecture in particular. However, he did not acknowledge quantity as an architectural premise for this development in his overall assessment of the period and was indeed skeptical to the way that some of his contemporary Norwegian colleagues, also former affiliates of PAGON, had solved the housing problems in praxis (Norberg-Schulz, 1983). Rinnan and Rolfsen were, to be held personally responsible for the large-scale suburban housing projects that in his opinion hardly let their new inhabitants develop a collective identity or a sense of belonging to a place – if at all (Norberg-Schulz, 1983, 9). The idea of creating dwellings in green recreation areas was, as he saw it, not appropriately realized in the projects of Rolfsen and Rinnan. The new type of green urban environments, of which Lambertseter is the first Norwegian example, "cannot be talked about as nature, since they are neither rural nor urban" (Norberg-Schulz, 1983, 69). According to Norberg-Schulz, nature was not a frame for the life lived in such suburban areas. Rather, the suburban areas had eaten up nature. Moreover, Norberg-Schulz criticized the architects behind the large-scale suburban neighborhoods for de-aestheticizing architecture in favor of politicized planning (Norberg-Schulz, 1983, 9). Even though he saw housing as the main problem for postwar architects and recognized that an enormous quantity of housing units had been built in postwar Norway, none of these structures are visually represented amongst the examples that he chose to illustrate this period in his portrayal of Norwegian architecture built between 1945–1980.

The legacy of Norberg-Schulz's understanding of architecture seems to be rather persistent amongst Norwegian architectural historians and heritage professionals who have specifically dealt with the history of modern architecture. The preference for certain types of architecture and the characterization of Norwegian postwar society as having low aesthetic ambitions in the years of reconstruction and rebuilding— is still permeating the architectural history from the welfare era (see for example Johnsen and Solbakken, 2010, Lexau, 2003). The visual presentations in the architectural production in the 20th century in the book *Norsk arkitekturhistorie* [Norwegian Architectural History] (Brekke et al., 2003), reflect a clear focus on iconic pieces of architecture ascribed to the oeuvre of individual architects. Even though a whole chapter of the book is dedicated to a description of the effects of World War II (chapter 13), and even though it mentions the immense production of housing between 1945 and 1960, with reference to Norberg-Schulz, mass housing is not given much attention in the book. A few pages describe the resurrection of the war-damaged cities in Northern Norway and the urban plans that were launched and realized after the war. Lambertseter is mentioned as the first new town in Norway before the text continues with an evaluation of the lamented block building:

“At the outset, the lamella block building appears to be a simple and sound solution to the challenge of constructing a large amount of housing units at an attractive price. However, favorable living conditions are reduced when one builds such blocks in dimensions, which are too large. In the postwar era, the immense need for housing paved the way for speculative development of housing that had a high degree of spatial utilization, with the result that many of the good qualities went down the drain” (Lexau, 2003, 346)

It seems that when the work of architects transcends the scale of the single autonomous building, the built product can no longer be characterized as architecture. This reduction of the notion of architecture may also count for the heritage authorities as we discuss below. The general picture that architectural historians have drawn of the architecture of which Lambertseter is the earliest example, tends to be rather critical. In recent years, renewed interest in Lambertseter and other Norwegian new towns seems to have emerged amongst a younger generation of architectural historians, some of whom are even directly promoted and financed by the involved building corporation OBOS (Bjørnsen & Kronborg 2009, Kronborg 2014).

BELLAHØJ – HISTORIOGRAPHIES

Danish architecture historians generally favor the results of the welfare housing policies more than their Norwegian colleagues. It is generally acknowledged that some of the “best architects” built the state funded tenant housing, which resulted in a “high architectural quality”. (Bendsen et al 2012, 13). Bellahøj is mentioned and depicted in most books on modern Danish architecture

and planning history, often as an exceptional place because it was the first large-scale housing area with free-standing high buildings (Dirckinck-Holmfeld et al (ed) 2009, Gaarmand 1993, Lind & Lund 2001). As the first building cranes were entering Bellahøj, architecture historian Knud Millech and architect Kai Fisker wrote a highly influential history of Danish architecture (Millech & Fisker 1952), in which they introduce the idea of a “functional tradition”, which they present as a core quality in the country’s architecture. Danish architecture, and particularly Danish housing, they argue, successfully combines two architectural motives: the modern credo that buildings must solve the functional needs of their time in the best way possible; and a strong focus on local traditions in terms of building materials, construction methods, building shapes and proportions. The combination of functionality and local qualities, the authors argue, can best be seen in Danish brick buildings, which express “firmness,” “order” and “harmony”. Millech and Fisker’s celebration of brick buildings that can be defined within the functional tradition is in line with a preference for craft and detail which is expressed in much Danish architecture historiography. Industrially produced montage buildings, on the other hand, are generally less favoured. An example is the seminal history of Danish planning by Arne Gaardmand, who praises the Danish tradition for crafted brick buildings, and after a brief discussion of industrial montage elements in modern architecture, quickly highlights the “severe technical problems” that can be connected with them (Gaardmand 1993, 52). The idea of a functional tradition as being particularly valuable in Danish architecture is reflected in the selection of post 1945 apartment housing that is listed (The Danish Agency for Culture, n.d. 2). The apartment buildings that have been listed, Jørn Utzon’s Romerhusene (buildings and landscape listed in 1987) and Dronningegården by Kay Fisker, C.F. Møller, Eske Kristensen and C. Th Sørensen (buildings and urban square listed 1995), are places that can be defined within the functional tradition. Conversely, no apartment blocks built with industrialized materials are as yet listed.

Another discussion in Danish architecture historiography concerns the typology of the free-standing high-rises like Bellahøj. Danes took up the international critique of high-rise housing that began in the 1960s. Critics in the Danish “environmental debate” argued that modern high-rise housing was out of touch with human needs (Nygaard 1984, 211). Alternatives to high-rises were sought and in 1971, an architecture competition called for projects to build dense, but still low-rise housing and to facilitate strong communities in smaller and less alienating complexes (Nygaard 1984, 231). Poul Erik Skriver, the editor of *Arkitekten*, which was the most influential architecture magazine, promoted the competition and the emerging new typologies that were to be called dense-low-areas (Skriver 1970). During the years when the dense-low-typology was much celebrated and highrises under strong critique, a comprehensive history of Danish architecture came out (Hartmann & Villadsen 1979). Its volume on apartment housing describes dense-low-buildings in utterly positive terms, while it criticizes the high-rise pioneer Bellahøj for its exposure to wind (Ibid., 183). Similar critical positions towards high-rise buildings continued up

to the 1990s. For example, Arne Gaarmand writes that “both the idea of the high-rise and the urge to build with large distances between free-standing houses *had to be criticized*” (author’s italics) (Gaardmand 1993, 70). However, times have changed yet again, and in recent years, high-rise buildings have become a hot topic in Danish urban discussions. In 2010, the city of Copenhagen presented Bellahøj as a successful example of a high-rise (Copenhagen City 2010, 36). This was part of an argument to allow the construction of high-rise buildings elsewhere, especially the disputed high-rise buildings “towers” on the site of the old Carlsberg brewery. These changing perceptions of Bellahøj’s high-rise buildings expose an often close relationship between contemporary problems, themes and positions in the architecture debate and historiography.

Also, Bellahøj’s landscape design has been much discussed. An influential writer on the subject is the designer of the landscape plan, C.Th. Sørensen, himself. In the memoirs that he finished as an 83 year-old in 1975, Sørensen presents his work on Bellahøj in a particular way. Instead of showing the entire landscape plan, he wants his readers to exclusively consider Bellahøj’s open air theatre (Sørensen 1975, 172). Elsewhere in the book, Sørensen proudly presents his extensive work on housing estates: “My work had been acknowledged. Soon all housing associations hired me” (Sørensen 1975, 100). Nevertheless, he only mentions his landscape design for other housing areas; for the brick buildings of Ryparken-Lundevænget, Tingbjerg and Klokkegården, all of which can be defined within the functional tradition and which are not as tall as Bellahøj. This perception of Bellahøj’s landscape; in which the enclosed open-air theatre is seen as a separate design object – it was a separate commission by Copenhagen City (Lind & Lund 2001, p 64) is reproduced later. Sørensen’s open-air theatre has been meticulously examined in terms of its geometry, composition and relationship with modern painting (Hauxner 2003, p. 155–156, Lund 2003, p 135., Høyer & Andersson 2001, 94–102, Lind & Lund 2001, 64). The spaces through which Bellahøj’s inhabitants walk on a daily basis are not discussed in the seminal texts on landscape architecture.

A radically different conception of Bellahøj’s landscape was introduced in the book *København* by architect Steen Eiler Rasmussen, first published in 1969 (Rasmussen 2011). He discusses Bellahøj on a much larger scale and is interested in how it relates to Copenhagen’s topography. Rasmussen praises the way in which Bellahøj’s high-rise buildings emphasize the slope and add vertical elements to the city’s skyline, while being cleverly placed in relation to the sun and wind. A similar interpretation that emphasizes the building-topography-relationship guided a survey that was presented in 1995 (Toft Jensen et al. 1995). According to this study, which was conducted in the context of local preservation by way of the Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment (SAVE method), Bellahøj is “one of Denmark’s most beautiful high-rise building areas” (ibid). This study concluded that Bellahøj is worthy of local preservation.

LAMBERTSETER IN CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE DEBATE

Lambertseter was suggested for listing as early as 1992, when the head of The Directorate for Cultural heritage publicly announced that either a selected area or a block at Lambertseter should be given the highest heritage status. However, while the announcement stimulated debate amongst the inhabitants of Lambertseter, it did not result in listing. A previous attempt to list Etterstad, a smaller but slightly older cooperative neighbourhood in Oslo planned and built in the late 1920s, is likely to have prevented the heritage authorities from pursuing the case further.² At Etterstad, a group of local inhabitants had instigated the potential listing in order to prevent their living expenses from increasing exponentially due to an impending rehabilitation project. This led to intense conflict amongst the inhabitants whose opinions were divided on this matter; one group argued strongly against listing and wanted their apartments to be upgraded, while the other group wanted the entire cooperative neighbourhood to be listed in order to avoid changes and maintain expenses at a stable level.

Lambertseter and Etterstad were no longer considered potential listing material or considered to be amongst the best or most representative examples of block housing of their respective decades in the report, “Det 20 århundredets arkitektur, nye boligformer med hovedvekt på blokkbyggeriet” (20th century architecture – new forms of housing with a focus on block building) published by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage (1993) in response to the European Council’s recommendations. This report aims at identifying housing blocks worthy of protection and listing, and states that it is difficult to find good and intact examples of block housing from the 1940s and 50s. According to the report, the majority of the residential areas from this period are characterized by alterations, such as new doors, window frames, balconies and façades. This, the report continues, has changed their appearance so that it is no longer original, thus making them uninteresting as cultural heritage, at least in terms of national heritage. Meanwhile, Lambertseter’s spatial organisation was awarded some protection by a local plan from 2006, which states that its urban form, the infrastructure, the vegetation and the suburban centre structure are its most important cultural historical value. Although this municipal plan offers some protection, the urban landscape is under pressure. In the recent municipal plan for Oslo “Smart, Trygg, Grønn” (Kommuneplan for Oslo, Smart, Trygg, Grønn 2014), Lambertseter is considered suitable for urban development and densification, which may completely alter the subtle relationship between the built structures and the landscape.

2. This assumption is based on information from Head of Oslo’s office of cultural heritage management Janne Wiberg, that was appointed at the Cultural Department of heritage management in the 1990s.

BELLAHØJ IN CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE DEBATE

Nearly 20 years after Bellahøj was defined as valuable and worthy of preservation, it was proposed as national heritage by Landsforeningen for Bygnings- og Landskabskultur (LBL), an NGO which has a special status in that it is the only organ whose proposals for listing a building must be processed by the Ministry of Culture (this is done by handing it over to the Historic Buildings Council, who must support a proposal before the Agency can list a building). In March 2013, LBL suggested that Bellahøj should be listed as it represents the first mass housing in Denmark (LBL March 2013). In August of the same year, they proposed the same status for another experimental concrete slab housing area for a housing association, Grenehusene 1957–58, Hvidovre (LBL August 2013). The NGO emphasizes Bellahøj's architectural quality saying that it is "one of the best built sites in Denmark" as well as in representing a significant period in national history: "The decisive listing value is due to the iconographical status of the entire Bellahøj area in relation to the development of welfare policy, industrial policy and the general significance of modernist expectations for the future. The placement of the modernist landmark on the highest point in the urban district is a powerful statement of faith in the future and belief in progress" (BL August 2013)

This attempt to list does not follow the previous mechanism, where single-family housing and brick buildings that correspond to the idea of a functional tradition are prioritized for listing. Rather, it is based on an understanding of listing as a tool to ensure that certain chapters in national history are represented, including mass welfare housing. The listing proposal can be seen as a reaction to an important event: the large foundation, Landsbyggefonden, had just approved a loan of 794 million DKK (106 million Euro) to the housing associations that own Bellahøj for its renovation (AAB et al 2014). This resulted in the following dilemma; if Bellahøj was listed, the planned renovation would be halted, and the loan would be lost if it did not happen in 2014. Furthermore, the economic gain of listing is insignificant for state-funded housing associations and their tenants (almennyttige boligselskaber), compared to private owners of listed buildings, who have opportunities for tax exemption. The economic dilemma and the potential consequences of listing in the renovation process were debated in the press: how should the present needs of residents be reconciled with historical documentation of 1950s' kitchens? Some tenants questioned why bureaucrats and experts should decide on every small change, when renovation of a housing area is really about people's lives in their own homes. The Head Secretary of Landsbyggefonden, Birger R. Kristensen, himself an important stakeholder of course, supported these tenants by introducing another perspective, "*What should be preserved, in fact, is the inhabitant's democracy*" (Kristensen cited in: Riis Holm et al 2013).

Despite the listing proposal, Bellahøj has not yet been listed. What happened instead was that the Historical Buildings Council has postponed the decision regarding the potential listing of Bellahøj (Historical Buildings Council minutes of meetings 2013–2014). Together with the municipality and the housing asso-

ciations that own Bellahøj the Agency for Culture has planned an architectural competition for a master plan for the renovation. In June 2014, a team led by Henning Larsen Architects won this competition. The Agency for Culture now works as special advisor to the planning process. While the state has taken on a new role in the renovation, it should not be mistaken for symmetrical cooperation. The Agency for Culture can proceed with the listing process at any time if the Historical Buildings Council recommends it, and that could potentially change the rules of the game. If listed, the housing associations that own Bellahøj will have to ask the Agency for permission for any alteration of the buildings and of the area. The Agency has the authority to order the owner of a listed building.

MASS HOUSING – A CHALLENGING SUBJECT FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

In the immediate post war years, welfare was an important item on the socio-political agenda in Denmark and Norway. In both countries, housing was considered to be a cornerstone of the construction of the welfare states. Although the countries chose different financial models to provide a large amount of housing, and even though the realization proceeded at a faster pace in Norway than in Denmark, mass housing became a significant feature in the urban and especially sub-urban planning in both countries after the war. Another common denominator is that welfare mass housing programs are at present excluded from national heritage protection.

Just like national heritage protection, historiography involves valuation processes that include some parts of the built environment while leaving others out. Together, listing and historiography constitute and present certain versions of the past. Selecting what becomes part of this authorized history depends on values that are neither absolute nor static. Our case studies showed how Norwegian architectural history largely excludes the country's enormous amount of mass housing from the dominant narrative about modernism, while the Danish historiography has been more diverse.

In the most recent decades, several architectural and cultural historians have begun to investigate large-scale planned housing areas in books and articles (Kronborg, 2014, Guttu, 2011. Reiersen & Thue, 1996 Bendsen et al 2012, Larsen, Sverrild, 2012 Bech-Danielsen et al ed. 2011, Wolf, Kirchengast ed 2014). The values that determine heritage production are changing, albeit slowly. This is illustrated by the negotiations on the potential listing of Lambertseter and Bellahøj. Lambertseter was proposed for listing two decades earlier than Bellahøj, but it was considered to be unauthentic in both appearance and materiality and thus not worthy of national heritage protection. No further action has been taken to list Lambertseter. Since then, the local regulatory plans have been the only guideline for the management of change in the area. The municipal plan from 2014 defines Lambertseter as a potential site for densification by increasing the number of buildings, something that may radically

alter the spatial organization and landscape qualities of the original scheme. Bellahøj is planned as renovated according to a plan that emphasizes the qualities of the existing landscape and buildings, but has no official national heritage value.

The Danish Cultural Agency's planned survey of neighborhoods by housing associations signals an emerging interest in the potential national heritage value of large-scale housing. In the discussions and actions that will follow this emerging interest in protecting mass housing, national heritage should be openly talked about for what it is; a constructed version of collective history in a democratic society rather than straight-forward safeguarding of seemingly obvious values.

Our study of which post war dwellings were listed in the two countries, showed that architectural values appears to have a much stronger influence in listing decisions than historical significance. Single family housing by renowned designers was much more likely to be listed than large-scale apartment building areas. It is thus important to openly discuss the role of mass housing in listing. Can the history of the many thousands who live and have lived in mass housing in the Scandinavian welfare states be included in the history that listing represents? The two case studies suggest that mass housing's encounter with the established practices in national heritage entails new challenges for professionals involved in heritage selection and management. Four of these challenges will be outlined below.

First, material authenticity is a key value in traditional building preservation that may not always correspond with the state of mass housing areas. But, the case Lambertseter with its new balconies and façade cladding showed that this is not always the case in large housing areas. How can such alterations be addressed from a national heritage perspective? At first, the debate about Bellahøj and Lambertseter was a struggle between whether the site should be *either* listed or developed – but how are both possible?

Second, mass housing challenges the established norm of “good architecture,” which heritage managers often present as a given. These are for instance the preference for a so-called functional tradition in Danish architecture or the Norwegian understanding of mass housing as non-aesthetic. How can we discuss architectural qualities while acknowledging that the values that we ascribe objects and sites with are neither stable nor absolute? How can we evaluate mass housing areas in ways that are specific to this kind of architecture and context? How can listing represent societal history if it is hard to grasp what is not established as good architecture?

Third, mass housing cannot easily be considered as separate objects. In both countries, listing has prioritized individual buildings with architectural finesse, and historiography has focused on architectural monuments or – as in the case of Bellahøj – landscape elements as separate works of art (the open air theatre).

However, it is vital to consider mass housing areas and their buildings and landscape at a larger scale in order to discover some of their key qualities. The way that Bellahøj and Lambertseter's designers and planners made use of the topography and the pre-existing farm buildings in the spatial arrangement of the blocks, their detailed design for a landscape that can combine recreation, play, transport and interesting views contributes a spatial richness and complexity that is often overlooked.

Fourth, mass housing challenges the process of listing. Local residents represent different interests in decisions about the future of their homes. These interests do not necessarily correspond with the aims of national heritage protection. The Norwegian cooperative housing system and the Danish housing associations have a strong tradition for involving residents in decision making. (How) can democratic decision making merge with listing, which is an expert-dominated realm? (How) can listing accommodate the interests of contemporary and future residents while at the same time protecting national values? In this regard, the Danish Cultural Agency's active participation in Bellahøj's renovation process is an explorative form of collaboration that attempts to mediate and exploit synergies between actors with different perspectives.

National heritage protection is often based on evaluations by a small number of experts who decide on the behalf of the public. The questions of whose heritage should be protected, why and by whom concern how we create collective history in democratic societies and how we manage our physical environment. Mass housing is an obvious starting point for a discussion about the representativeness of listing, as well as the role and relevance of this practice in the future.

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